

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 6, 2005

CONTACT: Dena Graziano
202-226-6888

CONYERS CHALLENGES CONGRESS TO FIX BROKEN ELECTION SYSTEM

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., issued the following statement on the floor of the United States House of Representatives regarding his objection to the certification of the Ohio electors:

“We are here today, not as partisans for one presidential candidate or another, but because we want to do our duty under the Constitution to protect our democracy.

We are here because of the inner city voter in Franklin County, who waited ten hours in the pouring rain, while suburban voters in the same county had no wait because election officials decided to reallocate voting machines from Columbus to the suburbs.

We are here because of the Hispanic voter in Hamilton County who was directed to the wrong voting table, and had their ballot thrown out because of a decision by the Secretary of State to throw out ballots cast at the right polling place but the wrong precinct.

We are here because of the elderly voter in Lucas County who requested an absentee ballot that never showed up and was refused a provisional ballot because of another partisan decision by the Secretary of State.

We are here because of the new voter in Delaware County, whose registration form was thrown out because it did not meet the paper weight requirements of the same Secretary of State.

We are here because of the African American voter in Summit County, who was targeted with an unlawful voting challenge because of her race and because she refused to answer a certified letter from the chairman of the Republican Party.

Most of all we are here because not a single election official in Ohio has given us any explanation for the massive and widespread irregularities in that state: No explanation for the machines in Mahoning County that recorded Kerry votes for Bush – No explanation for the improper purging in Cuyahoga County – No explanation for the lock down in Warren County – No explanation for the 99% voter turnout in Miami County – No explanation for the machine tampering in Hocking County.

The debate we have today will not change the outcome of November’s election. We know that. But out of today’s debate, I hope this Congress will respond to our challenge:

- A challenge to hold true bipartisan hearings to get to the bottom of what went wrong in Ohio and around the Nation on election day.
- A challenge to show the same concern about voter disenfranchisement in this country that we show in Afghanistan, and the Ukraine, and Iraq.
- A challenge to enact real election reform; that gives all citizens the right to a provisional ballot; that gives all voters a verifiable paper trail; and that bans election officials from serving as campaign chairs.

The thing we should never fear in Congress is a debate, and the thing we should never fear in a democracy is the voters. I hope that today we have a fair debate and four years from now, we have an election all our citizens can be proud of.”